

Keep Faith, Love, Do Not Forget

by Idris388

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Summary: 'Edmund likes these days â€" likes to sit and listen to the rain, likes to look up to the grey-bright sky, likes to see the ink of his words spilling across the paper, or read books about law or birds or heroic quests. They are always told a little differently than Edmund remembers them happening.' Edmund doesn't want to forget Narnia. Peter doesn't want to either.

Keep Faith, Love, Do Not Forget

**\*\*Keep Faith, Love, Do Not Forget\*\***

If asked, Edmund would most likely say that there were almost no similarities between England and Narnia. The air is cleaner there, and the magic is real, and the food is richer, and the wine is sweeter, and the people are kinder and cleverer and better.

The more he thinks about it, however, there is one significant difference that sticks with him. There is still war in Narnia, however peaceful it may seem. Creatures die and live by Aslan's will, there is sickness and poverty and hunger and cruelty and evil still springs from errant corners. But Edmund had been eighteen twice now, and it is a vastly different experience in England. In Narnia, at eighteen, he had been a Commander of the Army; he had fought wars and led campaigns and forged treaties and presided over murder trials. He had given way to the hand of executioners, and stayed those same hands; he had spoken words that had been heard and obeyed and revered over kingdoms. He had been barely an adult, but so much more.

Now, here, at eighteen, he is considered no more than a child. Now, here, value is placed on age and appearance, rather than true value and worth.

It frustrates him, this inability to express his opinion, this restriction on his intellect (so advanced that it is, for Edmund has not forgotten that once, he had been a twenty-five-year-old King),

this shadow. But for all that he feels this repression in every bone and sinew, he has to admit there are a few things (however few they are) that he misses about England when he is in Narnia.

Days such as these are missed.

Edmund turns himself a little more in the chair, so that his back is braced firmly against one arm of the chair. He swings his legs over the other arm and props his journal higher on his knees. The pen (still so inelegant between his fingers compared to a quill, even after all these years) scribbles swiftly across the cream page. The steady rain slides in silver streaks down the tall, thin window; a fire burns low in the grate; a record is playing in the next room, murmuring, the words too soft to distinguish. Edmund likes these days â€" likes to sit and listen to the rain, likes to look up to the grey-bright sky, likes to see the ink of his words spilling across the paper, or read books about law or birds or heroic quests. They are always told a little differently than Edmund remembers them happening. With less blood, less broken bones. More glory. Less laughter.

Usually, he writes stories about Narnia. Today, he is writing about trains. There is something he is trying to recall reading, about station timetables and gears, but somehow, he has slipped away into a land of talking horses and snow that falls overnight and covers the earth in a thick, sparkling layer-

"Such kingly posture, my Lord," a voice cuts in, and Edmund smiles involuntarily. A shadow falls across his page.

"Perhaps Your Majesty would care to demonstrate a posture that he prefers," Edmund replies, and tips his head back. A blond head, sparkling blue eyes, a familiar smile. "Peter, you're blocking my light," he adds.

"Aslan forbid," Peter laughs, moving to the side and seating himself in the opposite armchair, straight-backed and regal. Edmund sticks his tongue out at his brother (there are some benefits of being treated like a child). "And what is today's topic of rumination, brother?"

"Trains," Edmund says, forcing his mind away from the laughing voices of the Wood Nymphs, and the music of the rivers in the Western Wood. Peter makes a face.

"They're connected carriages that spit out steam, Ed."

Edmund throws him a look. "You always did have the most rotten sense of romance, Peter." This is, in fact, untrue. Edmund, and Peter as well, he is sure, can remember the numerous maidens that fell for the High King's charming demeanour and demure smile. But Edmund is almost too comfortable in his armchair to tease further, and settles with, "Or not."

It is enough to embarrass Peter, who is, as always, of one mind with his brother. Edmund smiles to himself as Peter flushes and protests. "I have no idea what you're talking about, Ed," Peter says finally.

"As Your Majesty says," Edmund replies. Peter huffs. Edmund returns

to his writing. \_Steam engines\_, he writes, \_are external combustion engines. They emit steam as a working fluid\_. The fire crackles slowly. The rain increases and decreases like waves against a shore. \_Water is heated and transformed into steam within a boiler. \_Peter is humming under his breath, a lullaby-like tune that is anything other than from this universe. \_The steam engine of a train usually consists of a cast iron cylinder and a pistonâ€|\_

The lullaby has words, Edmund thinks, but he cannot recall them all now. The lines drift in and out of his head, fragmented. \_â€|mountains of ice and valleys so fairâ€|the night is for sleep, and awaiting the dawnâ€|\_

He flicks to a new page and starts to scribble down the words he can remember, humming the tune to himself beneath his breath in an attempt to snatch more of the lyrics from the corners of his mind. Peter has stopped, and is watching him curiously. "Why do you do that, Ed?"

"What do you mean?" Edmund asks distractedly.

"Write everything down. You never used to. It's only sinceâ€|" \_Only since Aslan said that you and Lucy couldn't go back to Narnia\_, Peter deigns to say. Edmund says nothing; only considers the line \_â€|music my voice, and laughter my giftâ€|\_ He scrubs out the word \_voice\_ and replaces it with \_comfort\_, but that doesn't seem right either. "Are you going to answer me?" Peter asks, his voice slightly amused. He knows his brother's manner.

Edmund doesn't put down his pen, or meet Peter's eyes, but caves to his brother's wishes, as always. "I'm afraid I'll forget."

Peter laughs outright in surprise, then sobers when he realizes Edmund is serious. "That you'll forget \_Narnia\_? Impossible, Ed." Edmund stays silent and scuffs out the entire line in annoyance. Is he simply making things up that never existed now? Peter doesn't let go. "Edmund, why in Aslan's name would you be afraid of forgetting Narnia? Nobody could, nobody would â€" it's our \_home.\_"

"England was our home too and we forgot that."

Peter is stunned into silence at Edmund's statement, and the rain beats down harder than ever. Slivers of light fall across Edmund's page; silver mixing with the gold and amber of the firelight and the lamps. "Edmundâ€|" Peter says quietly. "We-We didn't \_forget\_ England. We justâ€|"

"We forgot," Edmund says bluntly, going back to his page about trains. He sketches a little square in the corner of the page. "We forgot about England and home and the professor and the house and the war. We forgot mum and dad, too. We forgot everything about this place, even though we'd grown up here. And now we're back, and I won't forget about Narnia too; I \_won't\_."

He speaks the last with a fierceness that is all King Edmund the Just, and only a little of Edmund from Finchley (because there's always been a little bit of both in the other). Peter stares at him. "You're right," he says at last. "Of course you're right."

Peter sounds almost broken, as if he is horrified by the notion of

ever forgetting that place, that golden magical place. This, Peter's small, child-like tone of voice, is the only thing that makes Edmund close his book and stand, moving over to where Peter is slumped in his armchair. "Stop it, Peter," Edmund says, resting his hands on Peter's shoulders.

"But you're right."

"Of course I'm right; I'm always right," Edmund says with all the cheek of a little brother. "That's no reason to have a nervous breakdown; come on, Peter, talk to me."

"Narnia â€" she's more than just our home," Peter says at last. "She's our Provider and our Carer. What if we forget about her? Whatâ€"what happens if we forget about her?"

"I think we know the answer to that already," Edmund says grimly.

Peter's face changes; darkens and closes. "That's different. Susan's only pretending to have forgotten Narnia, it's not true."

"How do you know that, Peter?" Somewhere in Edmund's eyes is a twenty-five-year-old man, a foremost judge, a kingdom-renowned scholar, a great, great adviser and a wisest King in his own right. What this version of Edmund is saying frightens Peter.

"She can't have forgotten. She can't," he whispers, and Edmund sighs.

"We forgot England. She can forget Narnia."

The Just King has given his ruling and Peter is left only to stare. "I don't want to forget," he says.

Edmund sighs and presses a swift kiss to his brow. Peter reckons he must look as bad as he feels, because Edmund's displays of affection are both rare and fleeting. "It's why I'm writing everything down."

"But I don't want to forget," Peter says, knowing full well how childish he sounds.

The look Edmund gives him makes him feel even younger. "I know that, Peter," he says slowly. "I'm not just writing it down for me."

\* \* \*

><p>"The lord who died on the gold island, Lu-"<p>

"Deathwater Island, Ed," Lucy replies, deftly weaving two flowers together by their stems. Edmund blinks, then recovers.

"Yes, Deathwater. Was that Lord Octesian?"

Lucy frowns a little, staring off into the distance. "Yes," she says slowly, then with confidence growing, "Yes, it was Lord Octesian."

"And then there was Bern, at the slave markets, and Restimar at Deathwater-"

"-Rhoop on Dark Island," Lucy says, shaking her head. "The poor man."

"And the three on Ramandu's Island," Edmund says, scribbling in his book as Peter looks on in bemusement. "Mavramorn and Revilian andâ€¦"

"And Argoz," Lucy says serenely, twining some more flowers together.

"Oh, yes," is all Edmund says, and notes down the lord's name. Having finished his record for the day, he closes the book with a snap and throws down his pen, stretching up in the sunlight, and falling down into the soft grass behind him. "How's the crown going, Lu?"

"How do you know it's a crown?"

"What else would a Queen be making?" Edmund asks with a soft smile. Peter unfolds his legs out in front of him. It's a remarkably warm day, with just the barest hint of wind and a beautiful autumn sky.

"It's only a flower crown, Ed," Lucy laughs, her hair lifting prettily in the wind.

Edmund yawns. "You never needed one anyway, Lu," he says sleepily. Lucy beams at him. Peter watches them both. They don't seem to have any trouble remembering the people they had been in Narnia.

\* \* \*

><p>"Your confounded brother is never around when one needs him," Eustace says, bursting into the room. Then, realising that Peter might have taken immense offence at the statement, backtracks. "Sorry, Peter, I just meant-"<p>

But Peter only laughs. Eustace is still a little in awe of him (High King, Emperor, Knight, legend), and they can all tell. "Missing again, is he?"

It's a habit of Edmund's, and always had been. Dark and thoughtful, the Just King enjoyed periods of solitude, coming and going as he pleased, and drifting away for extended joints of time. Not Peter, not Susan and not even Lucy knew where Edmund's best hiding spaces were, but Peter suspects that they are somewhere cool and shady, like his little brother's beloved Western Wood. "What do you need him for, Eustace, old chap?" Peter asks, and Eustace blinks at being addressed in this familiar manner.

"He told me he'd lend me some books."

Peter considers him. "Maybe I could help you find them. Did he say what they were?"

"I don't think they were those kinds of books, Peter," Eustace shakes his head. "Ed said that he wrote in them."

Peter stops dead. The journals. He's asked to read them, of course, but it's the one thing that Edmund has kept from him for a long time. That, and every injury or feeling he's ever had, Peter mentally amends, but this is different. These are tangible things, stories, and Peter has wanted to read them since that afternoon in the sitting room when Edmund had admitted why he was writing them. But Edmund always closes the book, moves it out of reach, and says that word of mouth is enough to remind Peter of everything.

And now, he is giving them to Eustace to read.

"I'll find him for you," he says firmly, then starts off.

\* \* \*

><p>Edmund is, in fact, not hiding, but hidden nonetheless by the overhanging leaves of the willow tree. He lies on his back on the bank and closes his head, listening intently to the whistle of the breeze, the rustle of the leaves, the trickle of the water. This willow does not have its own voice, but it does have a certain music to it; the way it moves, the way it sounds. With the dappled light on the backs of his eyelids, Edmund can pretend he is somewhere else, somewhere peaceful, somewhere-<p>

"Hello, brother."

Edmund doesn't open his eyes. "Good afternoon."

"Our good cousin is looking for you."

Edmund doesn't even crack an eyelid. "I'll speak to him back at the house."

"Ah. And would you mind telling me why Eustace is allowed to read those journals of yours, and I'm not?"

Edmund lifts one eyebrow very slight, but otherwise doesn't react; he's a superb actor. There is not a hint of surprise on his face. "I'm not letting him read them all, Peter. Just the earlier ones, about our reign." Peter sits cross-legged on the slope and considers his brother in silence. Edmund sighs. "Would you please not sulk? It's ruining my mood."

"Then give me an answer."

"You already know everything that's in those, Peter, and anything you don't remember, I'll recount to you. You don't need to read them. Eustace does."

Peter crosses his arms. "That's a rot excuse, and you know it."

Edmund props himself up on one elbow, opens his eyes and considers his brother. "It's a perfectly solid excuse. You have your own recollections. You don't need to read mine."

"You told me they were for me, too."

"They are for you. They're to remind me, so that I can remind you."

Well aware of his brother's talent for rhetoric, Peter ignores this last sentence. "I would like to read my own brother's recounts. Is that so unfair?"

"Yes, Peter," Edmund says. "Because they're mine. And if I choose to share them with our good, un-Dragoned cousin, that's my business. Not yours." This comes out a little harshly. Peter feels a stab of hurt, and blinks.

"Alright, then."

Edmund sighs. "Peter--"

But the elder is shaking his head. "No, you're right."

"I'm always right," Edmund says, with the barest hint of a sad smile.

\* \* \*

><p>They're all three in the sitting room when Lucy calls Edmund into the kitchen to help her. Edmund lays his pen and his notes down on the rug and springs up. "Coming, Lu," he says. She has him at her beck and call, and he knows it. It's not only Edmund she has wrapped around her little finger. Peter always has been, and Eustace is certainly on the way.<p>

Their cousin is seated in an armchair, his eyes scanning over a novel that he has stolen from his mother's forbidden bookshelf. Peter looks at him to see if he is watching. When it becomes clear that he is not, the High King snags Edmund's journal and fingers the edge. "Are you going to read that?"

Peter almost swears as Eustace's voice emerges from behind the book. "Maybe," he allows.

"Did Ed say you could?"

Peter pulls the cover to one side, then lets the books fall open naturally. The page in front of him is well-thumbed and well-read, as if Edmund has gone over it again and again, until the words are exactly right. "Don't tell him." It is a cousin-ly request, and an order from the High King.

Edmund's script is smooth and steady, running in strict horizontal lines across the pages that are the courtesy of his boarding school. But the way he swirls his capital letters, and the little curls on the ends of his gs and ys are purely Narnian and Peter smiles fondly as he begins to read.

On Seventh Day that week, we rose with the sunrise and went down to swim with the mermaids. The water was as smooth and cold as glass, but delightfully clear. The merpeople were delighted to have us, and, as always, Lucy charmed them all. The King of the merpeople told us that the Creatures of the Sea have their own laws, in addition to our own. Their laws are unspoken; they are about respect and rights of living, a covenant with Nature itself. We each respect Narnia and her lands as our home and our keeper, but the Sea Creatures cannot live outside of the element provided to them. Their covenant is one that

recognises and worships the life that Aslan has given to us, the humanity which binds us to every other being. They cannot truly die, one explained to me, for each life is returned to Nature, which lives forever, if Aslan wills. They cannot truly be forsaken by Nature, because each of them is a piece of it. And they cannot truly lose their faith, because by Nature and by Aslan himself, they live and die, more intimately than anything I have ever known.\_

\_ Peter is afraid of forgetting, as we all are. He is afraid of becoming like Susan. As we all are. But forgetting is not the most frightening thing. \_

\_ Forgetting something exists is not akin to believing that it is not real. We forgot England. It slipped from our minds, but we did not turn it away from us. Susan has strayed from Narnia itself, and from the heart of Aslan, and from His will. Her faith is gone. It is not the forgetting of Narnia we should fear, but the loss of belief. \_

\_ These chronicles are not for my memory alone, but also for my conviction. To remember and to see is to know. That is why I scribe these memories, and why I use them to remind myself.\_

\_ Peter and Lucy need no such crude means of faith.\_

By the time Peter reaches the bottom of the page, tears are streaming down his cheeks onto the rug. He wipes them away with one hand, but they continue on. Eustace sits on the edge of his chair, torn and confused. He opens his mouth to say something, but Peter does not look at him. He is reading his brother's words again and again "Peter and Lucy need no such crude means of faith\_.

He is neither sad nor happy, but full, so full, of emotion. Love and melancholy and pride and guilt and something else " full to the brim. The tears spill. Peter does not even register the footsteps until someone is crouched next to him, a hand tilting his head upwards.

"I told you," Edmund says quietly, his eyes so full of reprimand and understanding. "You don't need to read those."

And, as tender as a lion, he presses another kiss to the crown of Peter's head.

\* \* \*

><p>That night, when Edmund is lying in bed, drifting in and out of sleep, and hazy thoughts of sword fights and griffins, he feels a weight next to his bed and a hand on his brow. "You're wrong," Peter says in a low voice. Edmund isn't sure whether his brother knows he is half-awake, but he doesn't open his eyes and Peter continues. "I know " you're always right, except this time, you aren't. If I don't need those journals, then you certainly don't. Your faith has always been stronger than mine, and I've always known it. You have such faith in Aslan " and still enough left for me."<p>

Peter brushes the hair back from Edmund's face like he is eight years old, instead of eighteen " a High King's blessing, and an older brother's care.

Then he is gone. Edmund dreams that night of Narnia, and home, and a



magnificent Lion with worlds and kindness in his eyes. Each memory as vivid as the day it was created.

End  
file.